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HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT
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Torrey
R. T. (*trey*) Spannagel

Interviewed By

Patricia Young

January 18, 1980

INTERVIEWEE: R. T. (^{Torrey}~~TORY~~) SPANNAGEL

INTERVIEWER: Patricia Young

SUBJECT:

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TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

PY: This is an interview with R. T. (Tory) Spannagel for the Historical Society of Palm Desert Oral History Project by Patricia Young on January 18, 1980, at his home in Palm Desert.

Okay. You were talking about the Boy Scouts.

RS: Yes, that's Troop 76 in Palm Desert. I had a nice bunch of boys. And it occurred to me that I could do something nice for them and they could do something nice for me. I supervised the construction of the . . . you familiar with that trail up Eisenhower Mountain?

PY: I've seen it, yes.

RS: Well, Lloyd Tevis and two other fellows and I laid that trail out originally several years ago. The way we did it, we knew that's Bureau of Land Management land at that time. It now belongs to Living Desert, but at that

time it was Bureau of Land Management property. They've got rules and regulations of how a trail shall be. One of them is that it shant, shouldn't have any steeper grade than a six percent grade, and it shouldn't be more than two feet wide at any place. And you can't make cuts and fills that will show. You've got to be able to complete your trails so that when you stand at the bottom of it, you'll look up, you can't see it. It matches in with surrounding, which is almost an impossibility to accomplish. But we did. The first place to get that trail in. I developed a system of telling how far you're going and also the grade you're making. I got a piece of venetian blind cord a hundred feet long, or a little more than a hundred feet. We used a hundred feet of it. And I had a little level that I could hang on the cord so that I could look at it. I'm six feet tall. I can hold that cord on the top of my head and look over here at this level and tell when the line is level. And the other end of it is up the hill, another man on the other end, and he's holding it on the ground there. And I'm six feet up here when this level is level. That shows a six percent grade. Also, a hundred feet of line tells me how far

we've gone. So I keep a little book and I write down one, two, three, four, five times that we used the cord. Then that tells me how many feet it is on the trail so that if you wanted to get bids on the construction of it, you could tell them you've got a mile and a half or whatever it is that you've already got it down. Now the man on the upper end of that line has a bucket of blue paint with a bob stick in it. And when we've got it just right, he dobs the rock on the side. In the meantime, Lloyd and the other two fellows were scouting ahead to find the best way to go to where the least increase in pitch is, to get the easiest trail that we can get from there, climb around on those rocks. We thought it was going to take us a couple of days to lay that trail out. We started fairly early in the morning, but it went so fast. We got up to the top of the mountain by three o'clock or so in the afternoon. Had it all laid out with these blue paint spots on the rocks so that constructor, I think, could just follow that line of spots. There's one every hundred feet. Now it's getting late in the day. It was in the winter-time, and it was getting dark. And we had to come down off of there over those rough rocks without light.

(chuckle) It was kind of hairy, but we got down all right. We didn't come back down the same way, the trail, we took a shortcut and just went jumping down all of those rocks. This is a little bit rough for me because I'm eighty years old, and I shouldn't be doing that. But if you take your time, you can do it. But then we got these boys from up in Weaverville, northern California, were working on the Crest Trail up there. You been on that trail?

PY: No.

RS: That's the trail that goes from Mexico to Canada along the mountains, in the crest of the mountains, all the way.

PY: That's not John Muir trail.

RS: No, no. John Muir is an old one.

PY: Right.

RS: That's up around, Muir and Wilson, near San Francisco. No, this was a through trail. It's over two thousand miles long. Being built in sections here and there. At any rate, those boys work that trail right there in the summertime. They can't work there in the winter because the snow is too deep. It's ten feet deep or so. Because they're working high in the mountains all the

time. So they're anxious to have wintertime work, although it's a better place than Palm Springs, see. So we got them down here and they gave us a bid on the cost of putting that trail in. And it was within our possibilities, so we went ahead with it. Hank Clark, did you ever meet him? Well, he and I were the straw bosses on that job. We supervised the construction, watched the boys working all the time on that. And he likes to get out, Hank, hiking around. So we got that completed, and I know that shortly after we got it done the first people using it were very sloppy. They were throwing cigarette butts and empty cigarette papers and boxes on the trail, and they were putting all kind of junk along there, and it was looking terrible. So I got to thinking, gee whiz, I know this Troop 76 Boy Scouts like to camp up on top of that mountain. There's a kind of a flat place up there where they can lay their sleeping bags out and we can stay there. So I went over to see them, and said, "Now, look, boys, I think I can work something nice for you." I said, "I'll arrange it so that you can go up to Eisenhower Mountain whenever you want to and the exclusive right of Troop 76 to camp out up there if you'll see that that trail is kept clean, kept up." Oh, boy, they went for that in a big

way. So now they can go up there and camp any time they want to, but they also have to keep that trail clean. And if there's a heavy rain and it washes part of it, they have to repair it. But they don't mind that. They do it. So the trail is kept in pretty good shape. Of course, we never completed it clear to the top. We ran out of money a mile and three-quarter up from the bottom. There's a bench up there. Halfway up or a little more than halfway up. That's all the further we were able to go. We ran out of money because it costs, you know, to do that work.

PY: Now that's part of the Living Reserve?

RS: Yes. They worked a fast one. I think that Hank Clark was the chief instigator of this. He got the, you know Prince Pearson, the manager of the city of Indian Wells?

PY: No.

RS: He's a young fellow. I guess he's about, well, young fellow, twenty-five or thirty. Got a couple of kids, and he and his wife and the kids like to hike. So I got them to go with me, hike up that trail one time and see what because that's in the sphere of influence of the city of Indio. I said, "Look, why don't we figure

out some way to get this permanently tied into the Living Desert because that Living Desert is always going to be there, and it's really, it's an extension of this. How about it, can you work some deal out with the Bureau of Land Management to give Indian Wells that property and let Indian Wells give it to the Living Desert?" He said, "You got something. You're an angel worm, aren't you?" I said, "Why not?" So that's what happened, and it's now officially Living Desert property. There's two sections involved in that. Well, we got a donation from Mrs. Cook who was a pioneer down here. Cook Street is named after them, and they had a date ranch down there. And he was County Administrator or something, pretty important political figure.

PY: This is William Cook.

RS: Yes. So somebody, I don't know who it was, talked her into donating a little money to build a rest station halfway up that trail. And we got Ceria Henderson, whom I'm sure you know, to make a bronze plaque to mount on a rock up there. And we put up viewing tubes, pipes on a rack focused down on different things in the valley. One of them right on their old ranch location at Highway 44 on Cook Street, and on the mountains, Chuckwalla.

There's a lot of different places over there. Oasis, Palm Oasis, you look through these pipes and you could see them. And we put, made a rest station there with a ramada to keep the sun out so in hot weather, and it really get pretty hot hiking up there. Pretty nice to have a shady place to rest for awhile. Of course, the goal is to get the trail all the way to the top. But it isn't always as simple as just talking about it and doing it. Do you know Phil Boyd?

PY: Yes.

RS: Well, he's not quite as old as I am, but he's not in as good shape as I am, even though I'm in pretty bad shape. He's worse. When we got that trail up there, I talked him into coming and taking a look at it. You know, hell, I couldn't hike that. I said, no, you get tired and you go back down. I said, bring your wife along. I said, she can handle it. Well, I knew that he wouldn't let her go without him. He couldn't stand that. So the two of them went up there. And they got up quite a ways up the hill and enjoyed it. But he wouldn't go all the way up. I wanted to get him up on that meadow like up there. There's a big place. It's about twenty, thirty acres of almost level area up there. You'd never think

it was there, but it's kind of hidden. You get in the middle of that place, you can't see any development. Anyway, it's all wild. It's a wonderful place. So I said, why can't we get that trail finished all the way up? I said, we got it all laid out up there. It's all ready to go. I said, I can get these boys down here from Weaverville again. I think I can get some people that will put up some money and maybe the Living Desert might have some funds that are laying around. I said, there's one part of it that is very interesting, and it's going to cost a little money to work on it because to go up there you have to circle down the back side of that mountain. And on the back side, that's just above the hotel. What's the name of that hotel there? It's towards Indio. La Quinta. You can look right down on the roof of that hotel from up above there. But when you build the trail there, children are going to hike up there. So you got to be damn careful that you build it safe for anybody so they can't possibly get hurt. If anybody ever fell over there, it would kill them, you know. That's pretty steep. But there's all kind of rock up there, and it's very simple for these trail builders to build it right because they've

got the experience of years of work on that trail up north there. All I have to do is build a retaining wall there that the kids can't get over. Keep the trail up above the wall. And it's only a short distance, maybe a hundred feet. Well, he said, no, nothing doing. We're not going to do it. So that's the status of it today. Lloyd won't approve completing that trail on account of that one spot up there. No matter what we do to make it safe, he just doesn't trust those guys or me.

PY: What have you done besides this trail with the Living Desert Reserve? You said you were on the original board?

RS: Yes. I didn't get along too well over there. I was proposed for the board by two people, Bert Cavanagh, you know him? Bert and Lloyd Tevis both wanted me on the board because I've messed around so much around on that trail, they figured I'd be some value to them and help them lay out trails for there. So I was called the trail boss. Well, I expected that my new trails layouts were going to be done. This would be my chore and my responsibility, especially as I laid out their help, laid out that original trail and supervised up there every day watching those guys work, see that they

did it right with Hank Clark. But Karen apparently dislikes me for some reason or other. You know her, I think. So I was never given any jobs to do. Nothing. Trails were built down there, laid out and so on and they never asked me to help at all. I did very little work over there. I helped build a pond in that oasis. I didn't know just how to go about that. I think she got kind of mad at me, too, once because she paid too much money for building one of those stations along the trail. I ran out of redwood and so she didn't use my connections. After all I've been building here in the desert for twenty-five years and I know all the suppliers and I can get good prices on stuff. She paid way too much for the lumber on one of those things. And I called her on it. I said, well, why, if you have another one, let me help you on it. I can save a lot of money. She didn't like that because she's a girl that's got a lot on the ball, who's well trained. She's a good manager, but she doesn't know how to handle construction. And it gripes her when I . . . I even made some breakdowns, cost analysis for her. You don't like that. That means that she doesn't know how and she doesn't want anybody to think that she doesn't know everything about everything.

PY: (laughter)

RS: So we didn't get along too good. And finally it got to the point that I resigned clear out. What's the sense of it? I mean I got too many other things to do. There's too many beautiful places to see to worry about that. So I don't.

PY: Your interest in the Living Desert Reserve, did it come from . . .

RS: Hiking around. Well, originally from Randall Henderson. In the early days, Randall used to love to have barbecues out there. And also he loved to take pictures of birds. So he ran a water line out in the middle of that area and built a pond and built a blind that he could get in and take photographs of and invite all his friends to come and use that line. And he and Cerie used to, oh, they'd have picnics there and camp out all night. And I know that Ceria went to school with my sister. She belonged to the same sorority, Delta Gamma, and I met them early on when they had that museum going over there, selling paintings and stuff. And Randall and Ceria and Clara and I got to be pretty good friends. We went over to join the Death Valley Forty-niners organization and we drove over there and spent two days in Death Valley.

That was the deal. You ever been to one of those parties?

PY: No.

RS: Oh, boy. If you ever get a chance, go. It's something. You just can't believe what goes on. The first place, can you visualize four thousand campers all together from all over the United States coming together out there in Death Valley? So many that they have to lay off streets. They put stakes on them and this is Pennsylvania Street, and this is South Dakota Street, and so on. So these people come and they see that, that's where they're going to park, see? There's just streets of these campers. So many of them. And they're just having a ball! Of course, Ceria has been, Randall is a good friend of Death Valley Scotty, and so is Ceria. As a matter of fact, Ceria made a bust of him that is used on his grave up back of the castle where Scotty is buried. Ceria did that. She also did that beautiful laurel leaf that they have in the Park Headquarters. Have you ever been there?

PY: Yes.

RS: Well, you know that deal. She did that one, too. So we'd go down there and spent a week on the desert. They

have meetings of literary people one day. The next day there will parties. All get together, you know. And then they have (chuckle) the crazy deal down further on the desert. They have the burro races. You cannot believe what you're looking at. You go down there. They get together a lot of these wildburros. You know, they're all over the desert. And different people, men, are contestants. They're supposed to put a pack saddle on a burro and put the gear on the pack saddle and take him on. There's yards over to another site. Turn him over there, he's supposed to build a campfire, cook some hot cakes and feed the burro hot cakes, and then bring him back to the starting point. (chuckle) You know, the burros are wild, and this is the damndest thing you ever saw. Those guys trying to get them to stand still or even to get them to eat a hot cake that they cooked right there. And there's maybe fifteen of these going on at the same time. And there's hundreds and hundreds of people all around watching this, see, like rubber necker. Oh, it's such a funny thing. They have to practically wrestle the burros onto the ground to get stuff on those. And they're fighting and squealing. Oh, and they brought a big flat-bed truck from Las Vegas

and a whole bunch of girls, show girls from Las Vegas stood on this flat bed of this truck up there, and they had a band entertaining. The girls danced up there. Anything for excitement, you know. They had some very interesting discussions, talks. Then they went over to the Amargosa River and saw those puff fish. They got two of them here at the Living Desert, and they're practically all dead, I guess, now. But there was the Amargosa River has enough water that these puff fish live in it. They're about that long. There's a jillion of them there. It's an interesting thing to see. Oh, there's a lot of stuff in Death Valley to look at. You go up in the canyon if you're by yourself so that you are free. You don't have to be tied down to a group. You can go up this canyon and see some old charcoal manufacturing oven, beehive ovens, fifty feet high, built out of rocks like a beehive with tunnel openings in here. And the early days they would get mesquite wood and all of your woods in the desert and put it in there and bake it into charcoal. And they use that charcoal for smelting their ore. Well, there's about six of those great big beehive things still there, and you can walk into them. They're fascinating see that.

PY: Did you ever come to the Coachella Valley, in the first place, when you first came here? Why did you come?

RS: I came down to build houses over on Las Palmas in Palm Springs for George Alexander. I had done work for him in Los Angeles. He bought the Sunset Towers building, apartment, and he wanted it remodeled. It had a bunch of 1920 Art Muldern plastic cast stuff around inside, and it looked terrible. That's a wonderful building, and worth a lot of money. And he bought it real cheap and wanted to fix it up so that he could get fancy rents out of it, which he did. When I went in there, they were getting a hundred and fifty dollars a month rents for those apartments, and when I walked out of there, the rents had all increased to fifteen hundred dollars a month. So I'm the fair-haired boy, you might say. Plus George was awful stupid to own a lot of things. For instance, I lived not far from there when that was built. I saw them building it, and it was one of the finest built buildings in Los Angeles. It's just unbelievably strong and well built. They've got two floors of subterranean garages in there. You go up two different levels, so all the people that live in there

have got indoor protected storage for their cars. It's for millionaires that place. So George, somebody got to him, I guess, and he called to me one day, and he says, "Hey, figure out how much it would cost to put an air-conditioning evacuation system in there because," he says, "all those cars coming in leaves a lot of bad smell in the building." I said, "You're kidding!" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You know what it's going to cost, don't you?" I said, "You're talking about a hundred thousand dollars. Well," I said, "I got a nice little spot here. Come on over here." I took him over there. I said, "See that black button on the wall there with the red around it. You push that and see what happens." The original builder had put a big air conditioning evacuation system in there. All you had to do was push the button to make it work. And George had bought that building and didn't know this. This is what made me wonder about what kind of a man he is, or what kind of a builder.

PY: This is back in the forties?

RS: Fifties. Oh, wait a minute. Yes, it was early fifties, maybe forties, I don't know. It's a long time ago.

PY: Well, when did you come out here then?

RS: Fifty-four I think it was, something like that.

PY: And you moved to Palm Desert?

RS: Yes.

PY: What was that like then?

RS: Well, we lived in Palm Springs first. Well, there was nothing here then. This place where we're sitting right now, right over here is the big old house built of stone. It was built, oh, fifty years ago or so. Whoever owned it or lived in it caught fire and burned it. But the stone walls were there, couldn't burn, just flood, see. They got their own well there. They got a couple of swimming pools there. And a lot of stuff. I thought, gee whiz, I'd love to own that thing and live there myself. But to get it, I had to buy all this land here, too. And that's way beyond my means, I'm a poor guy respectively, you know, so I couldn't afford it. Never could buy it. But these two fellows from Newport Beach came up here and bought it. And they got Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company to finance the deal, to build this. Well, this was kind of close because the president of Pacific Finance, not Pacific Finance.

PY: Mutual?

RS: Pacific Mutual was an old friend of mine. And his mother

is an old friend of mine that I've know for fifty, sixty years, see. As a matter of fact, I used to take her out on movies with a sixteen millimeter Bell & Howell camera. And I had taken pictures of his mother, who I loved like my own mother. She was a sweet old dame and very wonderful woman. They owned a section of land down at Las Tunas Beach, you know where that is?

PY: No.

RS: Well, it's north of Santa Monica, back in the mountain there. And they have a spring in there and they decided to build a home. And Mrs. Call's husband was a judge, Superior Court judge, Joseph Call. He bought that land from the Seven City *Railway* and built this house there. There were other houses built in the area, but almost every year they'd get burned down. Brush fires would come and burn them down. So he built this house and covered it with steel, and it never could catch fire. I was brought into the picture I guess about 1930, something like that. I met her, and she's a big person, dame, the typical 1890 grandma type, you know. She gets a great kick out of swearing, saying filthy words. And out of that beautiful face it's so unbelievable, you know. You just can't help but love her. She's so sweet.

So she wanted me to do something, fix that house up a bit down there. So I went down and used to, Clara and I'd go along, Clara is a decorator, and we'd stay overnight there. And they planned what to do. And Mrs. Call and her buddy, May Ringe. Have you ever heard of her? You won't remember this. May Ringe is a real character, a very important person in the early days of California. May Ringe owned a big piece of property down on the beach there. I guess she owned fifty miles of beach frontage all the way to Oxnard from Santa Monica. And I don't know how far back she was running cattle in there. Well, she is also around seventy years old, and so is Mrs. Call, and they were girlfriends so, you know. Well, the first night we staying there, we were in a second-story bedroom and right down below is one of these swings, porch swings, and it's facing the ocean is right out here in the most gorgeous location. And these two old gals down there are talking about their love affairs when they were kids, and it was just unbelievable. We couldn't go to sleep. We had to sit there until they gave up. What we didn't learn about them. Now May Ringe was worth a hundred million dollars or so, who knows what. She tried to get the Sun & Pacific Railways to build a spur line down on their ranch there to handle shipping

cattle. They wouldn't do it. She says, "Go fly a kite. I'll build my own." Which she did. She built her own railway in there. It's still there some of the old track. She owned so much land you can't believe it. Hundreds of thousands of acres all the way to Oxnard from Santa Monica and back, then ten or twenty miles inland. It's unbelievable! She built herself a nice house down on the beach there. And Mrs. Call loved to get exercise, so it's a little leery for an elderly woman to go along the beach, especially if she wears about twenty-carat diamond rings on her hand. But she used to go for a walk every evening down the beach on that road. There's a river on there. And her chauffeur would follow her in the car behind to keep an eye on her, protect her. She'd get mad as hell at him if he'd get too close. She says, "I can handle him." Boy, what a character! She's just as sweet as could be. I did a lot of building around there for them. Clara furnished ✓ the place. And she had a son *Ace they call him* who was head of Pacific Mutual, president, and Joe Call was a judge in Los Angeles, a younger son. And they had a daughter who's married to a dentist in Los Angeles. This daughter was a pretty good sculptress. She did some beautiful

statues. Had such things as, she did a group of seals and cast in lead and put them down on the beach below the house. They had a quarter of a mile of their own beach frontage down there to go swimming in. (chuckle) Wow!

PY: So he was the one that financed the Dead Springs.

RS: No, Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company. And Smith was so surprised when I says, "Look, I just was going through my old film library, and I don't know why I was keeping those films of Mrs. Call." I don't think Asa or Joe knew that I even had them. And they were wonderful color films of her. And so I thought, gee whiz, they ought to have these films; not me. I said, I'm no relative. They just know that I'm a fine old gal. So I sent those films to Asa. I don't know whether he's got a sixteen millimeter projector or not, but he can borrow one if he has to. He was quite happy to get that. And when Smith heard that I was taking pictures of Asa's mother sixty years ago in Los Angeles, that was something. Well, that was a nice part of life to know such a fine lady as that. And so I hope you don't shock to the story I got to tell you. It might be a little shocking.

PY: The recorder is on.

RS: Is it? Maybe we better cut it.

Well, we came here and first to Palm Springs when I was working and building those houses in Las Palmas. And I didn't get along too well with George Alexander.

He was my boss, see, the owner of this deal. Because he was trying to cheat the public. And I had been very conscious of my responsibility to do a job for people.

They're paying me to build a house, they're going to get a house. And they're going to get the quality that I have told them they're going to get. But George got mad

at me for spending too much time making those houses nice. Now they were good houses. They're houses that sell today for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

And they were sold, a lot of them, to motion picture celebrities and that. I couldn't at the prices they were asking then, I had to give them their money's worth.

And he got sore at me for spending so much time making quality work, you know. So I said, "Well, George, why

don't you can me?" I said, "You're my boss. I pick my check up from you." I said, "I need this job like I

need a hole in the head." I said, "I'm not going to spoil my reputation for you. I don't give a damn what kind of

reputation you've got. But I do about myself." I said, "I've got a good reputation in Beverly Hills on home deals and Los Angeles, I've done a lot of building down there and a lot of those were down here and they might be future customers of mine, but they sure won't if I build some crappy houses. I'll get credit for it, not you." So I had to leave him. Walked out. And he got mad as hell at me.

PY: So what did you end up doing?

RS: I just left, and I didn't care. I'll dig up some work, which I did. So some people were building some apartments there for Hopalong Cassidy. Well, my wife had worked with Bill years and years ago in pictures with him. And I knew him. And we were building this apartment for him. And the fellow looked me up and wanted me to take over the job of running this thing because they didn't really know what they were doing. They were from Colorado and they didn't know anything about building on the *DESERT* and they were worried. So first thing I found out, they hadn't even taken out a building permit for the job. Building an apartment house without a permit! And they had a young fellow, a nice guy, but didn't know anything about the building business that came from

Colorado to run this job. And he was really up to here in difficulty because nothing was being done the way it should be. So he asked me if I would take it over, and I said, sure, why not, like to. So I went to work for them. And Hoppy was kind of happy to have me on because he knew my reputation in Palm Springs, and so on.

Incidentally, Hoppy had a very wonderful mountain cabin. Cabin, mountain castle, not far from where Mrs. Call's place was on the Santa Monica Mountains. Tremendous big place down there.

PY: Is Mrs. Ford still living?

RS: Yes, yes. Clara pulled a fast one on him at this time. She was head of the Red Cross in this area, and also the United Way. As a matter of fact, she wears a fifty-five year Red Cross pin. Fifty-five years ago she was doing things for the Red Cross in World War I in San Diego. So we needed, she needed, publicity for Red Cross to start a place, start the motion going so she could do good collections. She's a real angle worm, my gal. So I said, well, why don't we get, in the meantime, oh, I've been in building now out in El Dorado, and Ike was now president. And he was living at the El Dorado Country Club, and one of his important girls, secretary,

bought one of the houses I built in El Dorado Palms. And she was a real wonderful gal, and I got to know her pretty good. So when Clara said she needed some publicity gag to start off this Red Cross collection campaign, I said, well, how would you like to have Ike. I think I can work it. So I went to this gal, and I says, hey, do you suppose you could get Ike to pose for pictures from the newspeople and the magazines for the start of the Red Cross? I said, officially he's still the president of American Red Cross as president. She said, well, we can try it. I think it might work. He's a pretty nice guy. So sure enough, he said he'd so it. Get your press people out here and cameramen at the eleventh green on certain time. Of course, my wife was all excited about this because now she's got a big spread that she'll get in any paper anywhere in the United States with this. And it will make things roll here in Palm Desert and be easier to collect money. Well, she's got what she calls her money hat. She got a hat, and it's all covered with gold coins. They're not gold, they're *anazised* aluminum, all dangling all around. She had some money hats. She always wears that when she's going to collect money to give them an idea.

So she wore that hat, and Ike insisted that she pose with him for this publicity pictures. And he was awfully nice to her. Bert Cavanagh got kind of close to Ike in those days. He used to provide him with mesquite wood for charcoal for big barbecue. Ike used to love to make a barbecue and throw the steaks right on the coals. And then take a whisk broom and brush the coals, dust off and eat them. And that was one of Bert's ideas, and Bert taught him how to do that. You ought to get to old Bert. Bert will give you more stuff than you can shake a stick at. He's a real planner. Well, when Hoppy saw Clara's picture with Ike in a Riverside Enterprise, he said, gee whiz, why didn't you let me know. I'd help you out with a picture. So Clara got, I think Ceria was one of the gals and Mrs. Cook and some other gal, she got, they really worked a deal on Hoppy. (chuckle) The poor guy was so stupid. He didn't realize these gals were really catching him. But they got the cameramen together, and Clara said, we'll take a picture of this. It will be so and so and so. She said, what I want you to do is to write a check out to American Red Cross, and you hand it to me, and we'll take a picture of you handing me that check. He said, oh, all

right. So he took out his check and he wrote out a check for a thousand bucks. Now he didn't think he was going to give that check away. He thought it was just going to be for a picture. But Clara grabbed it and stuck it in her purse. (chuckle) And these women all went over and they kissed him for being such a generous guy. And that poor sap. He didn't realize that this was all a setup deal, see. And these gals. Do you know Marge Down?

PY: I'm . . .

RS: She was one of them. And they really had a ball. Poor Hoppy! Of course, poor Hoppy. God! I asked him once, I said, Hoppy, I've known you for quite a few years. I guess I had known him for about thirty, forty years in Hollywood and so on. I said, you must be an awfully rich guy. How rich are you? Well, this was a terrible thing to ask somebody how rich you are, you know. It's peculiar. He said, I don't know. He said, well, what brought it up is, I was down in Mexico and I saw a lot of Hoppy pictures being sold down there. And I said, are you getting a cut off of all those pictures they're selling down there? And he said, no, I didn't even know it was going on. I said, well, don't you know what's going on in your business? He said, well, he said,

I've been an awful lucky guy. He said, you know, when television came along, before this, he said, when I finished releasing my old Hoppy pictures, they still belonged to me, the rights to use them and everything else. And he said, I just kept them in my, he said, I got an organization in Hollywood where all this stuff is kept. So he says, I had an idea that when this TV came along, they're going to want to buy my pictures and run them on TV. So he said he had the, to get control of all of his old pictures, he had to buy back a lot of them from Bruntano's in New York; the publishers had bought his films in the early days and they had them all. And he had to buy them back from him. He didn't tell them why he was buying them back. He's a pretty shrewd cookie. But to do this, he had to sell everything that he owned. He had to sell his house here in Palm Desert. He had to sell that great big castle up in the Santa Monica Mountains, sell his cars, everything . . .

END OF INTERVIEW